REPLY

To: Examiner of the Patent Office

1. Identification of the International Application: PCT/JP03/11272

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5. Content of Reply:

The present invention relates to a method for manufacturing a masking member made of a thermoplastic resin, comprising; the preparation of a mold using the CAD data relating to the design of the part which is subject to masking, and the preparation of a thermoplastic resin mold with which to form a specific masking member to protect said area.

Literature 1(EP 1110619 A1) discloses the molding of an original sheet and the trimming of said molded sheet in a case where the masking member is molded by vacuum forming, but the production of the mold for the masking member using said CAD data relating to the design of the article to be masked, is not disclosed.

Literature 2(US 2001/0018622 A1) discloses the designing of the mold based on the CAD data of the product. However, said mold is used to mold the product itself, and is not the masking member to mask said product.

Literature 3 (JP 10-29081 A) describes the compiling of NC programming data by directing the route for the processing laser beam and the

inputting of the processed shape into the laser beam processing machine, using the CAD input principle, and the like, when the trimming is performed by the laser beam processing machine.

Nevertheless, in this Literature, use of the CAD data relating to the design of the article to be masked in the present invention is not disclosed.

Literature 4(US 5134911 A) disclosed a method wherein the cutting tool of the cutting machine is moved along both X and Y axes by computer control system when one or a plural number of sheets overlapped each other, is(are) cut intermittently along a continuous line by the cutting machine, said computer control system using the order output from one set of marker data describing the shape and disposition of the shape piece obtained from the sheet material in X-Y coordinates, or other input data. Nevertheless, there is no disclosure that said computer control system uses the CAD data relating to the design of the article to be masked.

The masking member is given a shape corresponding to the part to be masked, to protect said part of the article on which the masking member is to be used. Accordingly, in the present invention, the product is not designed independently, differing from that of the disclosure in Literature 2. Accordingly, up to now, only a method wherein the part to be masked is shaped using gypsum, to give a shape corresponding to the shape of the prescribed part of the article on which the masking member is to be used, has been considered.

Nevertheless, the real article on which the masking member is to be used is necessary in order to shape using gypsum in said traditional method, so that the mold for the masking member can not be manufactured until said real article has been manufactured, and the trial process, including the shaping in gypsum, and the manufacture of the trial mold, should be repeated many times until the final mold is completed, meaning that an enormously long time, and a great deal of trouble are necessary. In the present invention, since the mold for the masking member is manufactured using the CAD data relating to the design of the article on which the masking member is to be used, gypsum shaping becomes unnecessary so that repetition of the trial process also becomes unnecessary, and as a result, the final mold can be manufactured in a short time.

Accordingly, the expert can not produce the present invention referring to the disclosures in Literatures 1, 2, 3 and 4.